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Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour
... a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

March Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term March average:

Great Lakes Basin 131%

Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair) 114%

Lake 166%

Volume 10, Number 4 **April 8, 2002**

IJC Extends Authority for Peaking and Ponding Operations

Water Levels Increase on all Lakes Except Lake Superior

Monthly mean water levels increased on all lakes except Lake Superior from February to March. Lakes Michigan-Huron has joined lakes St. Clair, Erie and Ontario in their annual seasonal rises. Lake Superior is expected to begin its seasonal rise during April.

Monthly levels on Lake Superior declined by 3 cm from February to March. Lake Superior began April about 16 cm below its long-term average level. While the lake remains almost 10 cm below the lake's Chart Datum level, it is about 20 cm higher than it was at the same time last year. Water levels on Lake Superior are expected to increase slightly during April.

The level of Lakes Michigan-Huron rose about 4 cm from February to March. The lakes remain about 37 cm below average, but levels are 22 cm higher than they were last year at the same time and are expected to climb above Chart Datum during April.

Lakes St. Clair and Erie levels rose slightly less than expected from February to March, increasing 3 and 5 cm, respectively. At the beginning of April, lakes St. Clair and Erie were 15 cm and 4 below average. Both lakes, however, are about 13 cm higher than they were one year ago. Lake Ontario's level rose slightly more than expected from February to March, increasing by 11 cm. The lake began April about 8 cm above average and about 12 cm higher than it was at the same time last year.

A fragile ice cover coupled with the breakage of the ice boom just upstream of the Beauharnois powerhouse necessitated that Lake Ontario outflows be less than the amount specified by the regulation plan during February. These under-discharges combined with the water previously retained, resulted in 9.6 cm of water being retained on Lake Ontario. Outflows greater than those specified by the regulation plan during March brought the amount retained on the lake back to 7.9 cm, which is the amount agreed to by the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control for the purpose of assisting downstream users later this year.

Daily outflows from Lake Ontario are expected to be as specified by the regulation plan during April. If needed, reductions in outflow will be made to prevent Lake St. Louis level from rising above its flood alert stage during the Ottawa River freshet.

Superior

Lakes Michigan-Huron 128%

Lake Ontario 107%

Note: These figures are preliminary

March Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term March average:

Lake Superior 96%

Lake Erie 102%

Lake Huron 94%

Lake Ontario 102%

Note: These figures are preliminary

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

Montréal Harbour's monthly mean water level was 6.26 m during March, 79 cm below its period-of-record average level for the month, but 71 cm above its Chart Datum level.

St. Marys River Peaking and Ponding Operations

The International Joint Commission (IJC) has extended the authority for the Edison Sault Electric Company and Great Lakes Power Ltd. to conduct peaking and ponding operations in the St. Marys River, under the supervision of its International Lake Superior Board of Control until March 20, 2003.

In giving the one-year extension, the IJC has asked the Board to undertake further technical investigations and gather operational experience, and to report its findings by the end of 2002. Each month, the hydropower entities at Sault Ste. Marie receive an allocation of water of the St. Marys River flow for hydropower purposes. Peaking and ponding operations involve varying the flows at the hydropower plants to meet energy demand, which fluctuates during the day and the week.

For further information on St. Marys River peaking and ponding operations, please visit the IJC's website.

St. Lawrence Board Holds Multi-City Teleconference

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control held a highly successful multi-city teleconference on March 21. The teleconference connected Alexandria Bay and Rochester, New York, Cornwall and Toronto, Ontario and Montréal, Quebec. The teleconference provided an opportunity for participants at each site to discuss issues related to water levels and flows in the Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River system with Board representatives as well as hear the views and concerns of participants at the other sites.

Remember that the St. Lawrence Board and other IJC Board web sites can be accessed at: http://www.ijc.org

Lake Erie - Niagara River Ice Boom

Except for thin ice at times in some protected bays and shallow inlets, Lake Erie remained virtually ice-free for the winter of 2001-2002. As a result, removal of the Lake Erie - Niagara River Ice Boom was completed on March 7. The earliest ice boom opening was on March 5, 1998 and the latest was May 3, 1971.

Seaway Opens

The opening of the 2002 Seaway navigation season in the St. Lawrence

River and Welland Canal took place on March 26.

The International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Study Completes Year 1

The International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence Study has been very busy over the last few months. The Technical Working Groups have completed their Year 1 studies, the Public Interest Advisory Group has spoken to over 33 interest groups in the Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River community and the Study Board is busy working on their Year 1 Report for the International Joint Commission.

Our Newsletter

The second edition of Ripple Effects has been posted on the Study's website.

The newsletter is now available for your convenience, as a downloadable PDF file, viewable as a webpage or available in hard copy. If you would like to receive a printed copy of Ripple Effects, contact Arleen K. Kreusch in the U.S. at:
arleen.k.kreush@usace.army.mil
or
Amanda Morelli in Canada at:
morellia@ottawa.ijc.org

A Different Look

We've also made some enhancements to the site, so it's easier for you to find what you're looking for. Interested in what's been happening with our Technical Working Groups?

Having trouble locating information? Like to make some suggestions? Have any compliments for the team? Let us know.

Spreading the Word

We're trying to get members of the Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River community involved in the study and you can help us get the word out. Forward this email on to someone you know who might also be interested in the International Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Study. You can also help us by sending us your comments and feedback, tell us what concerns you the most about water levels.

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